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A THANKSGIVING MESSAGE TO AMERICAN
FARM WOMEN

A radio talk by Mrs. Ruby Green Smith, State Leader of Home Demonstration Work, Ithaca, New York, delivered in the Home Demonstration Radio Hour, November 6, 1935, and broadcast by a network of 47 associate NBC radio stations.

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It seems a bit early to speak of Thanksgiving today. But in our American homes, there are so many reasons for being grateful every day that I am venturing to speak of a Thanksgiving that is three weeks away!

"The still, small voice of gratitude" is too rarely heard. One of the finest of our American traditions is that of pausing, each November, to review our blessings and to renew our faith in human progress. On that first Thanksgiving day, in 1621, there was so little to be thankful for, as compared with 1935. It is our happy fortune to live in a country where, a century and a half after that first Thanksgiving, our national government was started, with its guarantees of religious and political freedom; where education, at public expense, is offered to all. Let us appreciate our public schools and colleges, whose training can not be lost as other investments for our youth might be. Alice Freeman Palmer's cook gave a masterly definition of education when Mrs. Palmer, without prior experience, produced from the oven a delicious loaf of bread. Bridget said, enthusiastically; "That's what education means, to be able to do what you've never done before."

Farm homes are no longer isolated. Their connections with the rest of the world, and which we take for granted, were unknown on that first Thanksgiving. Let us be thankful for roads, trains, autos, ships, and airplanes that have penetrated wilderness and desert, crossed streams and oceans, and climbed mountains, until San Francisco and London are nearer today than Washington and New York were a century ago.

Let us rejoice in our freedom of speech, of thought, of the press; in our freedom to worship under any creed; in our improving public health facilities, in safer banks; let us rejoice in gains in employment and in recreation; let us be grateful for humanity's new servant and joy -- electricity -- and hope that it may soon reach every farm home. Let us grow more appreciative and tolerant of other peoples, as telegraph, cable, press telephone, movies, books, magazines, and radio bring glimpses of their lives to us. I like to remember what distinguished contributions to American life our foreign-born are bringing to the United States.

There are a thousand things on which I should like to dwell, as worthy of Thanksgiving: The progress of the conservation movement; the laughter of children at play, a baby's smile, the tender beauty of flowers in the house and in the yard; the charm of trees, even in winter; the song of birds, the inspiration of sunset and starlit skies; of moonlight on the snow, sunlight, and shadows; of song, music, poetry, and of love; of greening spring, glowing fall, sun steeped skies, winter snows; of sparkling, friendly table talk in families and among friends where companionship grows with long association; of the satisfactions of good housekeeping, as an orderly background for the higher life of the home; of the opportunities of community service. Or I might speak of how we are emerging from the depression as a chastened people, having found some of the quieter values in life -- and of love, hope, winds and sun unchanged by hard times.

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But there is only time for one brief accent today and I choose this as fundamentally important to every home. We can not be too grateful that in spite of exploding guns in Ethiopia, half a hundred nations for the first time in history, are expressing national as well as public opinion against war. And when our Congress voted strongly for neutrality laws, it gave opportunities which, under the leadership of our President and Secretary of State, are serving as a basis for repeated declarations against the inhumanity of war. This is in contrast with the way in which war was accepted as the only means for settling international disputes when I saw my college friends enlist in 1898 and when young idealists in my family and your enlisted in 1917, swept along in the current that led to war, despite their convictions that war inevitably destroys civilization's progress, as it did the Parthenon or the great Louvain library in Belgium, and that no war is worth its costs in treasure, pain, and grief.

Indeed the peace movement has gained great headway now that not only do the people hate war, with its untold tragedies, but statesmen, teachers, preachers, editors, are all at work to keep us out of war and to stop the Italian-Ethiopian war. It was not so in 1776, in 1812, in 1845, in 1861, in 1914 or in 1918. This dramatic change in public opinion, the world around is perhaps the most heartening thing for us to remember for our 1935 Thanksgiving, because public opinion, expressed through organized efforts has the genuine, irresistible conquering power which has always been possessed by ideas that are righteous.

And when war becomes obsolete, the money that is wasted in wars can be used to provide more generously all of the opportunities with which we may develop and feel secure in homes that are more than walls, roofs, yards, furnishings, food, and clothing. We want home to be, to everyone, a magic word of sweet memories, a refuge in sickness and in health, in joy and in sorrow, where courage, strength, and faith are renewed, where trials and pleasures are shared, where friendships ripen, the center from which all members of the family go forth to meet their worlds of work or play; shelter of childhood, retreat for the sunset years, -- goal of youth's dreams of love.

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